



September Fall Festival

PLANNING CHECKLIST

A printable planning guide for kids ministers preparing October festivals for preschoolers, kids, and families.

How to use this checklist

Print one copy for your planning binder and one copy for your volunteer lead team. Work through the sections week by week in September, then use the event-day and follow-up pages to keep the experience welcoming, safe, and ministry-focused.

6–8 Weeks Before: CLARIFY THE VISION

- ☐ Choose the event date, time, and rain-plan location.
- ☐ Decide the event format: Fall Festival, Harvest Party, Trunk-or-Treat, or Family Fun Night.
- ☐ Define the win for the night: guest connection, family discipleship, community outreach, or volunteer engagement.
- ☐ Set basic goals for attendance, first-time guests, volunteers, and follow-up.
- ☐ Confirm budget, supply needs, and approval process.
- ☐ Reserve indoor/outdoor spaces, parking areas, and restrooms.
- ☐ Identify safety, security, first aid, allergy, and check-in needs.

Leader tip: Ask: What do we want families to feel, know, and do when they leave?

5 Weeks Before: BUILD THE FAMILY EXPERIENCE

- ☐ Select major attractions such as inflatables, hayrides, food trucks, pumpkin decorating, or carnival games.
- ☐ Create a preschool-friendly zone with simple games, sensory play, bubbles, story time, and parent seating.
- ☐ Plan elementary activities with enough movement, challenge, and variety.
- ☐ Add one family-together activity: scavenger hunt, family challenge trail, photo booth, or gratitude walk.
- ☐ Choose prizes, giveaways, and take-home resources.
- ☐ Create a simple registration or guest information plan.
- ☐ Decide how families will hear about the next step after the festival.

Leader tip: Include at least one activity that helps parents and kids participate together, not just move from booth to booth.

4 Weeks Before: RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

- ☐ List every role needed: setup, registration, greeters, parking, games, preschool area, safety, food, cleanup, and follow-up.
- ☐ Recruit volunteer leads for major areas before filling individual shifts.
- ☐ Create shift times and backup assignments.
- ☐ Choose especially warm, patient volunteers for preschool and first-time guest areas.
- ☐ Schedule a short volunteer training or huddle.
- ☐ Prepare volunteer instructions, maps, and emergency contacts.
- ☐ Confirm first aid support and safety coverage.

Leader tip: Your volunteers create the atmosphere more than your decorations. Put welcoming people where families enter first.



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Use these sections to move from big-picture planning to detailed execution.

3 Weeks Before: START PROMOTION

- ☐ Create and approve event graphics.
- ☐ Publish the event webpage or registration page.
- ☐ Announce the festival during services and in family ministry environments.
- ☐ Send email invitations to families.
- ☐ Post social media reminders and shareable graphics.
- ☐ Give families invite cards or simple text they can send to neighbors.
- ☐ Promote through weekday preschool, local parenting groups, and community calendars where appropriate.
- ☐ Prepare clear signage for the church property.

Leader tip: Make it easy for one family to invite another family.

2 Weeks Before: FINALIZE LOGISTICS

- ☐ Confirm all vendors, attraction rentals, food plans, and delivery times.
- ☐ Purchase supplies and assemble game bins by station.
- ☐ Create a site map with entrances, exits, restrooms, check-in, preschool area, food, seating, first aid, and quiet space.
- ☐ Create a parking and traffic flow plan.
- ☐ Print registration forms, name tags, volunteer lists, and directional signs.
- ☐ Prepare a supply restocking plan for games, prizes, and food.
- ☐ Walk the event path from a first-time guest perspective.
- ☐ Confirm accessibility accommodations, nursing space, quiet space, and seating for parents and grandparents.

Leader tip: Look for friction points: Where will families feel confused, crowded, or unsure where to go next?

1 Week Before: COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

- ☐ Confirm every volunteer assignment and shift time.
- ☐ Send volunteer instructions, parking details, arrival time, and dress guidance.
- ☐ Send a reminder email to families and church members.
- ☐ Post final social reminders with date, time, location, and who the event is for.
- ☐ Review safety procedures and emergency contacts.
- ☐ Prepare welcome bags, guest cards, or ministry information.
- ☐ Print the event schedule and final map.
- ☐ Prepare follow-up emails and invitations to the next family ministry opportunity.

Leader tip: The best Fall Festivals create a reason for families to return.



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EVENT DAY + FOLLOW-UP CHECKLIST

Keep this page near your clipboard on festival day.

Event Day: BEFORE FAMILIES ARRIVE

- ☐ Arrive early and walk the full event space.
- ☐ Set up registration, welcome, and first-time guest areas.
- ☐ Place directional signs where families make decisions.
- ☐ Test attractions, games, microphones, lights, and check-in tools.
- ☐ Stock every station with supplies, prizes, trash bags, and backup materials.
- ☐ Review assignments with volunteers and answer last-minute questions.
- ☐ Pray with your team before guests arrive.

Event Day: DURING THE FESTIVAL

- ☐ Welcome every family warmly as they arrive.
- ☐ Watch for first-time guests and help them feel oriented.
- ☐ Check preschool spaces often for safety, crowding, and parent comfort.
- ☐ Restock supplies and prizes as needed.
- ☐ Capture photos and videos if permissions allow.
- ☐ Check in with volunteers and rotate breaks.
- ☐ Create conversations with parents instead of only managing tasks.
- ☐ Invite families to the next clear step before they leave.

Leader tip: The goal is not just a smooth event. The goal is a family who feels seen, welcomed, and connected.

Week After: FOLLOW UP AND LEARN

- ☐ Send a thank-you email to attending families.
- ☐ Contact first-time guests with a warm, helpful next step.
- ☐ Thank volunteers personally and celebrate wins.
- ☐ Share event photos or recap moments with the church.
- ☐ Review attendance, guest connections, volunteer feedback, and supply notes.
- ☐ Debrief what worked, what felt confusing, and what to change next year.
- ☐ Save notes, maps, supply lists, and vendor details for next fall.

Debrief Questions

What worked best? What surprised us? Where did families spend the most time?

Where did guests need more help? What would we simplify next year? How can we continue relationships with the families who attended?

Planning Notes
